

Moving to the specifics on foreign policy

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George Bush's touting of his foreign policy abilities is on weak grounds. Although the posts he held in the CIA, the United States and China might suggest otherwise, each of them was temporary: two sessions of the General Assembly and less than a year in both China and the CIA.

In no case was he chosen because of what he knew, but rather because a "temporary interim appointee" was needed. In not one of these jobs did he stay on long enough to get on top of key issues or to begin to disentangle and comprehend the complex bureaucracies of the CIA, the UN and the People's Republic of China. "Temporary interim" appointments do not an expert make.

Bush was appointed to the UN as a consolation prize for having lost a senatorial race against Lloyd Bentsen in Texas. The appointment received a push from John Connally, who had switched to the Republican Party and argued that Texans would be annoyed if the former Democrat became secretary of the Treasury and their Republican senatorial candidate got nothing.

While Bush at the UN, one commentator noted that he "does not have as important an advisory role in developing foreign policy as did most of his predecessors."

After being rejected in favor of Nelson Rockefeller as President Ford's vice president, Bush got another consolation prize - he was named chief of the US liaison office in China. The position served the purpose of distancing Bush from the stench of Watergate. After 11 months in China, he was back in Washington to take over his third temporary job.

Congressional investigations into the CIA, and the resignation of William Colby, led to the nomination of Bush as director of the CIA, and on Jan. 30, 1976, he took over the job. As a condition for his confirmation, it was agreed that he would not become a vice-presidential candidate in 1976. This was to ensure a nonpolitical director of the CIA. His total tenure in this complex post was less than 12 months. So much for the experience of the "temporary interim appointee" in foreign affairs.

Bush's record as vice president adds little to the above; in addition, he is plagued with a failing memory on the drug-trafficking role of Gen. Manuel Noriega of Panama, the secret airlift of arms to El Salvador and the illegal sale of arms to Iran.

During his tenure as head of the South Florida task force on drugs, no dent was made in the drug trade. In spite of his central role in the fight against the international flow of drugs, Bush professes to have no knowledge of Noriega's role in drug-running, even though the Department of Justice has indicted him.

A review of the congratulatory letters sent by the United States to Noriega in recent years suggests that drugs were a secondary concern of the administration. To assure no clarification of this matter, the White House has ordered the State and Defense Departments and the CIA not to cooperate with a congressional investigation of possible illegal activities by Noriega.

Felix Rodriguez, involved in a secret airlift of arms from El Salvador to the Nicaraguan contras, told the press that the vice president was his contact for the oper-

ation. Bush professes no knowledge of Rodriguez, whose post in El Salvador received the active encouragement of the vice president's office.

A lapsed memory was also featured in the illegal sale of arms to Iran. This sale raised funds that, through a series of convoluted Swiss bank operations, were converted into funds to buy arms for the contras, thus bypassing a congressional ban on such activities. Records indicate the vice president's presence at many of the key meetings on these events.

What is essential for a president in dealing with foreign affairs is a conceptual mind, a foreign policy vision and the ability to energize a staff. One must have the ability to select full-time policy formulators; to organize and manage staff members; to coordinate the activities of the State Department, the National Security Council, the Department of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the multitude of functional agencies that affect foreign policy. This, in turn, permits the president to create and implement an integrated foreign policy.

Dukakis' speeches indicate that he has conceptualized a foreign policy perspective. It recognizes the reality of interdependence, the need for partnerships, the interaction of economic and political factors in national security policy and the role of environmental issues.

Neither candidate wants a weak America. The question is how to maintain effective strength. The scientific community has raised serious doubts about "star wars." The doubts are both about the practicability of elements of the program and, perhaps more important, its enor-

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mous cost. There will always be disputes about particular weapons systems, partially on technical grounds and partially on which corporations or individuals or which branches of the defense establishment will gain or lose power. The procurement scandal in the Defense Department lends credence to Dukakis' position that there is a lot of waste in defense spending. The Congressional Budget Office report on the B-1B bomber states that it would cost almost \$8 billion to overhaul the existing model. Why should any presidential candidate accept this expenditure without considering alternative approaches? Neither Dukakis nor Bush is an expert on the technical and scientific aspects of weapons systems. Both will need and both will have access to specialists.

The sooner we can have a public debate on the issues the sooner we can get beyond the negative campaigning of the "temporary interim appointee." These debates must include the issues of conventional versus nuclear strategies, "star wars," Europe after 1992, Soviet structural reforms, the international-debt problem, strategies for Iran and Iraq in the post-war period, Japan and the newly industrialized countries, the role of the United Nations in peacekeeping and the abysmal record of the United States and its failure to fund these and other UN efforts. There are endless issues to be discussed. It is time to move from the ephemeral to the specifics. It is time for the American people to judge the qualities of these two candidates.

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